

NEWTON FAIR HOUSING COMMITTEE

Newton Housing & Community Development Program
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, MA 02459. Phone 617-796-1156. TDD/TTY 617-796-7089

January 5, 2011 Meeting Minutes

{Approved at February meeting}

Fair Housing Committee members in attendance: Sheila Mondshein (chair), Phil Herr, Josephine McNeil, Susan Paley, and Esther Schlorholtz

Fair Housing Committee members absent: Henry Korman, Doug Sweet

Staff: Trisha Guditz, Robert Muollo, Jr.

Materials Distributed to Members:

- January Agenda
 - Draft December Minutes
 - Summary of Fair Housing Initiative Program Grant application
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The meeting came to order at 8:03 a.m.

1. Review/approval of December meeting minutes

The word “also” of the penultimate paragraph on page 2 was removed. The minutes were approved as revised.

2. Status report on architectural access compliance report and discussion of draft distributions

Robert noted that the draft FY12 Annual Action Plan needs to be reviewed by the FHC at its February meeting. To accommodate sufficient time at February’s meeting to discuss the first draft of the architectural accessibility compliance report (accessibility report) staff will provide a bullet list of the main points in the draft Annual Action Plan. All CDBG advisory committees review the document prior to a spring public hearing.

Robert reported that the first draft of the accessibility report will be available to members for review on January 19th. Phil pointed out that it should be made clear that the report is authored by the consultant and that the report was commissioned by the Fair Housing

Committee. It was acknowledged that each stakeholder interviewed as part of the report, or that was otherwise included in the report's discussion, will have a chance to comment after the first draft is received by the FHC. The following process regarding report distribution was finalized at the meeting by the FHC and staff:

The first draft of the accessibility report will be sent to the FHC as soon as it is released (January 19th); the FHC will then provide comments to the consultant and discuss the draft at the February meeting with the consultant. The second draft will then be distributed to stakeholders for their comment, including the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies, within 2 weeks of its receipt. The FHC and the consultant will discuss what comments should be integrated into the report and how at the March FHC meeting. Stakeholders will also be invited to this meeting and comment on the report. The third and final draft will be compiled after the March meeting and be due to the City at a date yet to be determined. Phil suggested that the FHC conduct public outreach after the final draft is submitted to the City. A forward will be written by the FHC for both the second draft and final report. Staff will discuss the proposed process with the Planning Department Director and follow up with the FHC regarding report distribution to the Mayor.

3. Update on written report for application for Fair Housing Initiatives Program (FHIP) grant and discussion of other fair housing activities

Staff provided a brief summary of the Fair Housing Initiative Program grant application submitted to HUD. Phil asked if statistics exist for cases of the City's fair housing complaint process. Sheila responded that those statistics are compiled in the City's Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice and noted that complaints filed with the Human Rights Commission may be referred to MCAD and/or HUD if resolution is not achievable, which the Human Rights Commission on occasion. There were also housing complaints of discrimination in Newton that were filed separately with HUD or MCAD as reported in the AI.

Sheila asked if there was any flexibility in terms of the type of training from what was proposed in the FHIP application. Trisha said that in her experience a change in the project's scope would have to be approved by HUD. Sheila noted that because HUD is seeking to fund FHIP applications where training is geared toward generating fair housing complaints that some needs identified by the FHC were not part of Newton's FHIP application. One such example is the need to provide affirmatively furthering fair housing training for the city's appointed and elected officials. Josephine suggested that for this training to be effective that it be tailored to different target audiences within the City. Robert confirmed that this and other trainings could be paid out of the CDBG set-aside for fair housing activities. Sheila noted that the outcome of the FHIP application

and the results of the accessibility report will help in deciding what types of trainings are implemented by the FHC.

4. Member reports/updates on recent issues from other community bodies (Mayors Committee for People with Disabilities, Newton Housing Partnership, Planning and Development Board and Human Rights Commission).

Sheila and Esther noted that the Human Rights Commission has conducting preliminary planning for a possible year-long program about Newton's ethnic neighborhoods and the history of Newton diversity. One such tool to be used for the program is the documentary video about Newton's storied Myrtle Baptist Church, which will be shown in June. The FHC discussed whether this program could be incorporated into a fair housing month event and ultimately decided that the program would not constitute a fair housing month event.

Phil provided a brief update on Newton Housing Partnership happenings. He stated that the Partnership had recently supported two affordable housing projects, both of which go beyond federal and state accessibility requirements. Josephine suggested that these projects be acknowledged for going beyond those requirements.

5. Other business

Sheila notified the members that Girard had unexpectedly resigned from the committee. In a follow up conversation with Girard, he cited lack of necessary dependable transportation to morning meetings as the reason for his resignation. According to Sheila, he was willing to rejoin if meetings changed to the evening when his transportation is more reliable, but he is also open to discussing alternative means of transportation if rescheduling was not possible. Sheila asked the members present if their schedules made it feasible to hold evening meetings. The members did not find a change in meeting time feasible. It was determined that staff will follow up with Girard to see if he'd be willing to rejoin if a transportation alternative for the morning could be identified to meet his needs.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 a.m.